



Ambassador Jeffrey L. Bleich – Launch of Fulbright Professional Scholarship

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**Remarks of Ambassador Bleich  
at the Launch of Fulbright Professional Scholarship for the  
Not-for-Profit Sector, Sydney**

*(As prepared for delivery – November 10, 2011)*

I am delighted to be with you all this morning.

The ultimate job of an Ambassador is to find ways to strengthen the relationship between two nations, and you all have made my job very easy this morning.

The very best way to improve the relations between nations is to put our best young minds together.

And that is what we will do today in launching this new Fulbright Professional Scholarship.

Before we do that, however, I'd like to speak for a moment both about idea behind the Fulbright Scholarship and then about the very special function of this particular scholarship.

The idea behind the Fulbright program is that one educated and committed person can make a difference. That was not only J. William Fulbright's idea, but he proved it was true.

In September 1945, William Fulbright, a mere freshman senator from Arkansas, had a single idea: to turn our swords into plowshares. He proposed that the United States use proceeds from the sales of surplus war property to fund the "promotion of international goodwill through the exchange of students in the fields of education, culture and science."

Today, more than six decades later, we see what his idea and his commitment produced. It has spawned 4600 U.S.-Australia scholars and launched their extraordinary achievements in virtually all disciplines. It helped produce ANZUS and our great alliance. And it helped forge a world in which both Australia and America have turned old rivals into our friends.



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This was one person's idea. It gives proof to Margaret Mead's adage that "we should never doubt the power of a small group of committed people to change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Fulbright's insight is that learning is different – and better -- when it occurs with people from other nations and in unfamiliar places.

Being with people who were schooled and trained differently – whose life experience is different – sharpens our insights. It takes us out of the habits of thought that reinforce our prejudices and blind spots. Being with scholars with different backgrounds, different approaches, tests our thinking and it makes us better thinkers.

Being in a different place also makes us think differently. Think of what it is like when you travel some place for the first time. We go somewhere we've never been before – and we see it with fresh, intense eyes, and bring a new perspective to that world. We are more aware of the way the air smells, of the color of the sky, of the taste of the foods, or the wildlife around us. We learn a different language and we discover that words exist for thoughts that had been left unformed in our minds.

And we also let go of some of our fears. We arrive in a place wary of others and discover how normal things are – that they, like us, seek little more than a better life for their children.

Einstein once said 'No problem can be solved by the same consciousness that created it. We need to see the world anew.' The genius of Fulbright is in providing that opportunity to our best and brightest.

This is the genius of Fulbright everywhere. But it is especially true here in Australia; because Australians start with the same fearlessness about the power of ideas. They're pretty fearless about crocodiles and sharks and box jellyfish and a few other things too. But our societies are based on more than just free capital, free markets, free movement; most of all they are based on what many others fear – free minds. Americans and Australians share this faith – that no idea is so dangerous that it cannot be discussed. Progress comes from testing and challenging all ideas – good and bad – and having the judgment to follow the good and discard the bad.

Because of this unique "mate-ship," there is no better or more important place in the world for our scholars and professionals to exchange their thoughts than here in Australia. For over six decades, we have demonstrated that together we can solve problems that other nations can't.



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It is not surprising then, that the U.S. and Australia continue to improve and update the Fulbright Program to meet the changing needs of our society. Last year we introduced a new set of Fulbright Scholarships in Climate Change and Clean Energy. And today, we launch a new scholarship. I am very proud to announce the establishment of the Fulbright Professional Scholarship in Non-Profit Leadership, the first of its kind in Australia. This scholarship will provide an opportunity for a gift and committed person to spend up to 4 months in the U.S. to study, learn and research about leadership in the not-for-profit sector.

This is an inspired idea. I have held a lot of jobs in my life – I’ve been a lawyer, a managing partner, a board chair, a public servant, a professor, I’ve worked in the White House, and I’ve also been a short order cook, a dock-worker, a house painter, and a machinist. And the hardest job I’ve ever had, without question, is the head of a non-profit. This is an area in which budgets are always tightest, where funding is never guaranteed, where every effort and expense has to be justified to the penny, and results are usually long-term and hard to measure. We work our non-profits for long hours, at low pay, and usually in shabby conditions.

And yet it is one of the most important parts of any civil society. In fact, imagine our societies without the Red Cross, without Legal Aid, without Breast Cancer Awareness, without the World Wildlife Fund. Non-profits serve most of our least advantaged people, those who are sick, those who are poor. They promote science. They educate. They protect us from discrimination. They rehabilitate. They build most of our great monuments.

This is an area that needs our very best leadership. And so we are deeply grateful to the Fulbright Program. We are especially grateful to the organizers of today’s event - Australian Scholarships Foundation, the Australian-American Fulbright Commission and Origin Foundation and in particular Kevin McCann - for this invaluable gift.

I congratulate you and I look forward to the great success of this new and important chapter in the history of Fulbright.